

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (original) Apparatus comprising:

(a) a frame; and

(b) a plurality of character assemblies that each include:

(1) a substrate configured to fit in the frame; and

(2) a section of refrigerant conduit coupled to the substrate and having one or more thermally conductive segments arranged along a first side of the substrate to form the shape of a character;

(3) wherein the section of refrigerant conduit has a plurality of terminations extending from a second side of the substrate.

Claim 2 (original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising, for each section of refrigerant conduit, a connector coupled to one of the terminations of the section.

Claim 3 (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, for each section of refrigerant conduit, the character is a letter of the alphabet.

Claim 4 (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the frame and the substrate of each one of the character assemblies are comprised of UHMW polyethylene.

Claim 5 (original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising, for each section of refrigerant conduit, an inlet connector and an outlet connector connected to the section.

Claim 6 (original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:

- (a) a tank containing a quantity of refrigerant; and
- (b) a manifold fluidly coupled to the tank and having a plurality of outlets;
- (c) wherein each of the manifold outlets is fluidly coupled to one of the terminations of a respective one of the character assemblies.

Claim 7 (original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the manifold is supported by the frame.

Claim 8 (original) The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising, for each section of refrigerant conduit:

- (a) a hose extending to the section from the manifold; and
- (b) a connector coupled to the hose and to one of the terminations of the section.

Claim 9 (original) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein:

- (a) the manifold is supported by the frame;
- (b) the frame and the block of each one of the character assemblies are comprised of UHMW polyethylene; and

(c) the section of refrigerant conduit of each one of the character assemblies is comprised of copper tubing.

Claims 10-14 (cancelled)

Claim 15 (original) Apparatus comprising:

- (a) a frame; and
- (b) a plurality of character assemblies that each include:
- (c) a substrate configured to fit in the frame;
- (d) a section of refrigerant conduit coupled to the substrate and having one or more thermally conductive segments arranged along a first side of the substrate to form the shape of a character; and
- (e) a plurality of springs elastically coupling the section of refrigerant conduit to the substrate.

Claim 16 (original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the conduit has a square cross section.

Claim 17 (original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein, for each section of refrigerant conduit, the character is a numeral digit.

Claim 18 (original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the frame and the substrate of each one of the character assemblies are comprised of UHMW polyethylene.

Claim 19 (original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the section of refrigerant conduit has a plurality of terminations extending from a second side of the substrate.

Claim 20 (original) The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising, for each section of refrigerant conduit, an inlet connector and an outlet connector connected to the section.

Claim 21 (original) The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising:

- (a) a tank containing a quantity of refrigerant; and
- (b) a manifold fluidly coupled to the tank and having a plurality of outlets;
- (c) wherein each of the manifold outlets is fluidly coupled to one of the terminations of a respective one of the character assemblies.

Claim 22 (original) The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the manifold is supported by the frame.

Claim 23 (original) The apparatus of claim 21 further comprising, for each section of refrigerant conduit:

- (a) a hose extending to the section from the manifold; and
- (b) a connector coupled to the hose and to one of the terminations of the section.

Claim 24 (new) A method for freeze branding livestock, comprising:

- (a) for each one of a set of characters formed from one or more exposed, coplanar segments of a thermally conductive conduit mounted on a substrate, fitting the substrate into a frame;
- (b) causing refrigerant to flow through the thermally conductive conduit;
- (c) then applying the segments with uniform pressure against the hide of a specimen of livestock to brand the specimen; and
- (d) then stopping the flow of refrigerant.

Claim 25 (new) The method of claim 24 further comprising, after part (d):

- (e) replacing the conduit with another thermally conductive conduit having exposed, coplanar segments that form a different set of characters;
- (f) causing refrigerant to flow through the replacement conduit;
- (g) applying the segments of the replacement conduit with uniform pressure against the hide of a second specimen of livestock to brand the second specimen;
- (h) then stopping the flow of refrigerant.

Claim 26 (new) The method of claim 25 further comprising repeating parts (e) through (h) a number of additional times, each time replacing the conduit with a replacement conduit having exposed, coplanar segments that form a unique set of characters and applying the segments to individually brand a single specimen of livestock.

Claim 27 (new) The method of claim 24 wherein the character shapes formed are letters of the alphabet.

Claim 28 (new) The method of claim 24 wherein the frame is comprised of UHMW polyethylene and each one of the character assemblies includes a block comprised of UHMW polyethylene.